

Eastern Illinois University The Keep

2010

Press Releases

9-21-2010

09/21/2010 - Autism The Musical.pdf

University Marketing and Communications

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_2010

Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "09/21/2010 - Autism The Musical.pdf" (2010). 2010. 72.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_2010/72

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Press Releases at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2010 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

Subject of "Autism: The Musical" to Present Lecture on EIU Campus

Sep-21-2010

When traditional therapies did not work for her son with autism, Elaine Hall turned to the arts.

Hall, a professional acting coach, introduced actors, musicians and writers to her son's "isolated autistic world." The results changed not only the life of her son, Neal, but those of other children throughout the whole world.

Hall, now the subject of the two-time Emmy Award-winning HBO documentary "Autism: The Musical," is scheduled to present a multi-media lecture to discuss her discoveries and the subsequent founding of a theater arts program, The Miracle Project, that helps children of all abilities.

"Using Creativity and Joy to Bring Out the Best in All Children" will be presented from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 30, in the Grand Ballroom, MLK Jr. Union, on the campus of Eastern Illinois University. Admission is free and open to the public.

According to Jean Smitley, an associate professor in EIU's Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences, the number of children diagnosed with autism has "increased 10-fold in the past 20 years. And the severity varies from child to child.

"Parents are looking at different therapies to see what works best for their child," she added.

Smitley noted that Hall's lecture will present something of interest for "families with children who have autism, as well as for therapists, doctors, teachers, social workers and other professionals, and as well as actors. And anybody else who may be interested in learning more about autism and ways to integrate creative drama into a child's life."

Seating will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Hall's Miracle Project is a theater and film arts program for children with special needs and their typically developing siblings and peers. The project's mission is to "provide a loving, accepting nurturing environment which celebrates and honors the unique and often unrecognized talents of these young people by guiding them through creative workshops and artistic programs."

Her EIU lecture will include a multi-media presentation of techniques used to develop abstract thinking, communication, self-expression, self-regulation, friendships and body awareness in children, including those with autism and other developmental disorders.

Leadership training, self-advocacy and low-cost interventions will be discussed, as well as how to rally community support for creative interventions and socialization programs.

Hall, who presents workshops throughout the U.S. and Canada, has written and directed more than 30 children's plays. She's been honored by the Autism Society of Los Angeles, Autism Speaks, Areva Martin's Special Needs Network, and Holly Robinson Peete's HollyRod Foundation, among others.

She serves on the L.A. Senate Select Task Force on Autism, and spoke at the United Nations. She created and directs an arts enrichment program and a Bar/Bat Mitzvah program for children with autism at Vista Del Mar, in Los Angeles. She is also the author of "Now I See the Moon: A Mother, A Son, A Miracle."

In conjunction with Hall's lecture, EIU is offering a free viewing of "**Autism: The Musical**," from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 23, in the Doudna Fine Arts Center Lecture Hall.

"Autism: The Musical" follows Hall, five autistic children and their parents as they "improbably, heroically mount a full-length original stage production. Through trial and error, tears and laughter, these incredible families learn to communicate their feelings in song and performance, finding solace and joy in the act of creating."

Co-sponsors of Hall's visit on the EIU campus are the College of Arts and Humanities; the College of Education and Professional Studies; the College of Sciences; the Departments of Communication Disorders and Sciences, Special Education, Psychology and Theatre Arts; the School of Continuing Education; the Graduate School; and the Coles County Arts Council.

In addition to her EIU appearance, Hall will be the guest of honor at a **meet-and-greet book signing** from 3:45 to 5:15 p.m. Sept. 30 at the LifeSpan Center, 11021 E. County Road 800 North.

A **reception/open house** will take place, also, from 8:45 to 10 p.m. that same day at the Charleston Transitional Facility, 689 Castle Drive (Northwest Business Park), in Charleston.